

LASH LARUE

A Fawcett Publication

WESTERN

JANUARY

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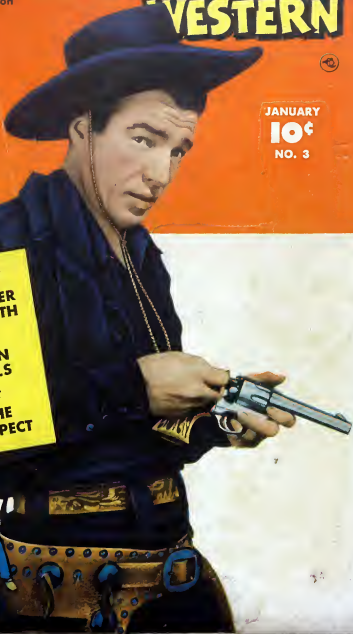
IN THIS ISSUE:
THE DEFENDER
OF THE TRUTH



GHOST IN
THE HILLS



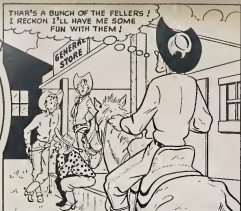
THE
SUSPECT



WAGONWHEELS



WOODEN YOU KNOW!





LASH LARUE WESTERN

Executive Editor
WILL LIEBERSON

Editor
C. V. WOODS

The following outstanding magazines are easily identified on their covers by the words A FAWCETT PUBLICATION.

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WHIZ COMICS • WESTERN HERO • ROCKY LANE WESTERN • NYOKA THE JUNGLE GIRL • GABBY HAYES WESTERN
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Every effort is made to insure that these comic magazines contain the highest quality of wholesome entertainment.

W. H. Fawcett, Jr., President

Lash LARUE and The **DEFENDER of TRUTH**

The Eagles Gap Dispatch

WARNING: ACE DECKER'S GAMBLING CASINO IS CROOKED

DESPITE THREATS OF BODILY HARM, WE ARE WRITING THIS OPEN LETTER TO THE HONEST CITIZENS OF EAGLES GAP TO RUN ACE DECKER AND HIS GANG OF CUT-THROATS OUT OF TOWN! WE THINK WORTHY CITIZENS OUGHT TO BE AWARE OF THE FACT THAT ACE DECKER IS A CRIMINAL AND A SCOUNDREL.

ACE DECKER'S GAMBLING CASINO

Telling the truth is the only honest thing to do, but it is often the hardest thing to do, too, as in the case of Editor **SAM LUND**, whose truths were interfering with Killer **ACE DECKER**'s crooked plans! **ROYING MARSHAL, LASH LARUE** finds that he has stuck his neck into a nooseful of unexpected danger when he prepares to defend "**The Defender of Truth**!"

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AT THE CHIEF MARSHAL'S HEAD-QUARTERS.....

DO YOU RECOGNIZE THIS GRITTER, LASH?

I SURE DO! THAT'S CAESAR MONSOON, THE PRISONER WHO ESCAPED FROM THE STATE PRISON A YEAR AGO AND DISAPPEARED INTO THIN AIR!



DO YOU RECOGNIZE THIS MAN?

NO--CAN'T SAY THAT I DO!



HE CALLS HIMSELF TOM DAWSON AND LIVES IN EAGLES GAP. PENCIL IN A BEARD ON CAESAR'S PICTURE AND THEN SEE IF YOU RECOGNIZE HIM!



WHY, CHIEF, IT LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE TOM DAWSON!

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT WHEN I ACCIDENTALLY PASSED HIM WHILE RIDING THROUGH EAGLES GAP, SO I HAD A PICTURE TAKEN OF HIM WITHOUT HIS KNOWING IT! AS FAR AS I COULD FIND OUT, EVERYONE THINKS HE'S A RETIRED BANKER WHO LIVES A QUIET, RESPECTABLE LIFE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN!

WHAT MAKES ME SO SUSPICIOUS IN ADDITION TO THE RESEMBLANCE IS THAT HE JUST MOVED THERE A YEAR AGO! IF HE SHOULD BE CAESAR MONSOON, I KNOW YOU'RE THE MAN WHO CAN PROVE IT!

THANKS FOR YOUR CONFIDENCE, CHIEF! I'LL TRY TO LIVE UP TO IT! LET'S GO, BLACK DIAMOND! WE'RE HEADING FOR EAGLES GAP!



MEANWHILE, IN THE OFFICE OF THE EAGLES GAP DISPATCH.....

THAT'S A MIGHTY TEMPTING OFFER YOU MADE TO BUY MUH NEWSPAPER, MR. DAWSON, BUT IT'S NOT FER SALE!

TOO BAD! RUNNING A NEWSPAPER WOULD HAVE HELPED ME PASS AWAY ALL THE TIME I'VE GOT ON MUH HANDS SINCE I RETIRED!

IF YOU HAVE ALL THAT MONEY, WHY DON'T YOU START YOUR OWN PAPER?

I THOUGHT OF THAT, BUT EAGLES GAP ISN'T BIG ENOUGH TO SUPPORT TWO PAPERS! IN CASE YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND ABOUT SELLING, YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME! IN THE MEANTIME---

---KEEP WRITING THOSE ARTICLES ABOUT ACE DECKER'S GROOKED GAMBLING CASINO! THE PEOPLE OF EAGLES GAP APPRECIATE THEM!



BUT THERE ARE SOME WHO DON'T! INSIDE ACE DECKER'S GAMBLING CASINO.....

A FEW MORE ARTICLES LIKE THIS AND WE'LL BE RUINED!

OUR WORRIES WILL SOON BE OVER, ACE! DIDN'T YUH TELL US YUH SENT FER THE KILLER, WHIP WYATT, TO RUB OUT EDITOR LUND!

SURE, ACE SENT FER HIM, GLOSSY, BUT UNTIL HE GETS HYAR, I OPINE SOMETHING SHOULD BE DONE TO MAKE SURE SAM LUND DOESN'T GET OUT ANOTHER EDITION OF THE EAGLES GAP DISPATCH!

JASPER'S RIGHT! WHY DON'T YUH TWO GO DOWN NEAR THE NEWSPAPER OFFICE AND START SOME HORSEPLAY--- LIKE TOSSING ROCKS AT EACH OTHER AND, IF ONE SHOULD MISS AND HIT SAM BY MISTAKE, WOULDN'T THAT BE TOO BAD?

WE GET YOU, ACE! LET'S GO, JASPER!

AND AS LASH RIDES INTO EAGLES GAP...
EAGLES GAP DISPATCH OFFICE

C-R-A-S-H!

TRY ANOTHER, GLOSSY! THAT ONE MISSED SAM!

GAP DISPATCH

GET AWAY FROM HERE --- YOU HOODLUMS!

WELL, THIS ONE WON'T MISS!

BUT AS GLOSSY WINDS UP FOR THE PITCH.....

AREN'T YOU BOYS A LITTLE TOO OLD TO BE PLAYING WITH ROCKS? SOMEBODY'S LIABLE TO GET HURT ACCIDENTALLY!

THANKS, STRANGER, BUT THAT ROCK WASN'T TOSSED ACCIDENTALLY!

OUCH!!

SNAP!

WELL, YOU CAN RELAX! I'LL MAKE SURE THEY DON'T PLAY ANY MORE GAMES!

THANK YOU! NOW I'D BETTER GET BACK TO SETTING UP THE NEXT EDITION OF MUH PAPER!

HEY, WHAT'S THE IDEA OF BUTTING IN? DON'T YUH REALIZE YO'RE HELPING THE WRONG SIDE?

THE WRONG SIDE?

EAGLES GAP DISPATCH OFFICE

THAT'S RIGHT! THE MOMENT YUH SWUNG THAT BULL WHIP, I RECOGNIZED YUH, WHIP WYATT! YUH HELPED SAVE THAT NEWSPAPER CRITTER AND HE'S THE VERY COYOTE YO'RE SUPPOSED TO GET RID OF!

WHIP WYATT! MY OLD ENEMY! AND THEY'RE MISTAKING ME FOR HIM! I WAS SUPPOSED TO CHECK ON CAESAR MONSOON, BUT THAT'LL HAVE TO WAIT! IT SEEMS AS IF I'VE STUMBLERED ONTO AN ATTEMPT AT MURDER WHICH I MIGHT BE ABLE TO PREVENT!

ACE WILL GIVE YUH THE DETAILS! LET'S GO IN! I RECKON HE'S WAITING FER YUH!



HERE'S WHIP WYATT, ACE! HE'S COME IN ANSWER TO YORE NOTE!

I'M SURE GLAD TO SEE YUH, WHIP! THE BIG BOSS WANTS TO HIRE YUH TO WIPE OUT SAM LUND! HOW MUCH DO YUH WANT FER THE JOB?

BIG BOSS? SO THERE'S STILL SOMEBODY ELSE IN ON THIS! WELL, IF I'M GOING TO CLEAN UP THIS MESS, I'LL HAVE TO THINK OF SOME WAY TO MEET HIM, TOO!

I NEVER DISCUSS MONEY WITH ANYBODY BUT THE BIG BOSS! TAKE ME TO HIM AND WE'LL SETTLE MATTERS!

BUT I CAN'T DO THAT! HE NEVER SEES ANYONE BUT ME! IN FACT, I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS WHO OR WHERE HE IS!

NO TALK TO BOSS--NO DEAL! SO LONG!

HOLD ON! THIS IS IRREGULAR, BUT IF YUH WAIT HYAR, I'LL GO FIND OUT IF THE BOGS WILL SEE YUH!



I HOPED THAT BLUFF WOULD WORK! NOW ALL I HAVE TO DO IS SIT TIGHT AND I'LL FIND OUT WHO'S BEHIND ALL THIS!

WHILE I'M GONE, YUH TWO GO OUT AND MAKE SURE THAT THE NEW EDITION OF THE EAGLES GAP DISPATCH DOESN'T REACH THE PEOPLE! BURN THE ISSUES IF NECESSARY!

BUT AS GLOSSY AND JASPER LEAVE TO CARRY OUT ACE'S ORDERS....

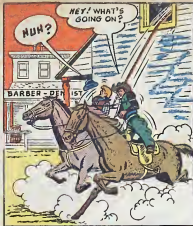
I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO CHANGE MY MIND ABOUT SITTING TIGHT! I CAN'T WARN THE NEWSPAPER MAN WITHOUT GIVING AWAY MY TRUE IDENTITY! ON THE OTHER HAND I CAN'T JUST SIT BY AND LET THESE RATTLESNAKES BURN HIS PAPER! I HOPE THERE'S A WINDOW IN ONE OF THOSE ROOMS UPSTAIRS!



THIS ROOM HAS ONE! GOOD!



AND THEY HAVEN'T GOTTEN FAR AWAY WHICH MAKES THINGS EVEN BETTER!



MUH?

HEY! WHAT'S GOING ON?

JASPER, CAN YUH SEE WHO'S PULLING US UP?

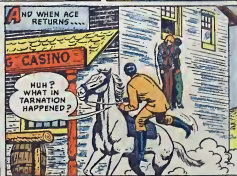
NO! BUT IT WON'T BE HEALTHY FER HIM WHEN I DO!



I'M AFRAID YOU'LL NEVER SEE WHO DID IT! NOW TO TIE THE LOOSE END OF THIS LASSO TO THE BED AND GET DOWNSTAIRS BEFORE ACE RETURNS!

POW!

CONK!



AND WHEN ACE RETURNS...

MUH? WHAT IN TARNATION HAPPENED?



AND AFTER GLOSSY AND JASPER ARE CUT DOWN AND REVIVED...

FER THE LAST TIME, I TELL YUH, ACE, I DON'T KNOW WHO DID IT!

I CAN'T DEPEND ON YUH CLUMSY FOOLS TO DO ANYTHING RIGHT! IT'S A LUCKY THING FER US THE BOSS CONSENTED TO SEE WHIP WYATT SO NOW HE'LL WIPE OUT SAM LUND FER US!



NOW YUH TWO GET OUT OF MUH SIGHT!

MUH ROOM IS NEXT DOOR! I'LL GRAB SOME SHUT-EYE, MUH HEAD STILL HURTS!

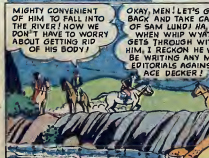
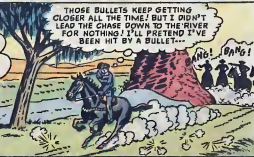
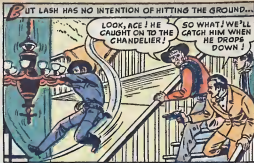
WELL, WHERE AND WHEN DO I MEET THE BIG BOSS?

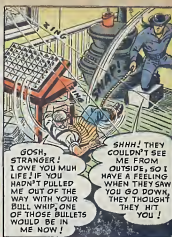


BUT BEFORE ACE CAN REPLY..... IT'S VERY IMPORTANT, ACE! YUH GOTTA COME RIGHT DOWNSTAIRS-- BY YORESELF!

WAIT HERE, WHIP! I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!







BUT AS LASH KEEPS HIS EYE ON WYATT, HE DOESN'T NOTICE THAT GLOSSY AND JASPER ARE ALREADY BACK!



BUT LASH CATCHES SIGHT OF THEM OUT OF THE CORNER OF HIS EYE AND BEFORE EITHER CAN PULL THEIR TRIGGERS.....



I RECKON THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP THEM QUIET UNTIL AGE ARRIVES WITH THE BIG BOSS!



— THEN FASTEN GLOSSY TO THIS RAIRPIPE SO THEY CAN'T GET IN MY WAY OR GET AWAY!

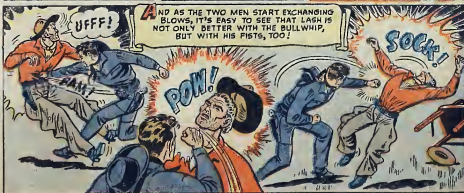


BUT WYATT HAS HEARD THE GUNSHOTS AND.....



ALL I HAVE TO DO IS PULL TIGHTER AND MUH WHIP WILL STRANGLE YUH!





AND AS ACE ARRIVES WITH THE BIG BOSS....

THIS WYATT'S REALLY QUITE AN HOMBRE, CAESAR!

SHHH! I TOLD YOU A MILLION TIMES NOT TO CALL ME BY THAT NAME! NOBODY IN EAGLES GAP SUSPECTS I'M AN ESCAPED CONVICT OR THAT I REALLY RUN THIS CROOKED GAMBLING CASINO! CALL ME DAWSON!



IS THIS WYATT? (GULP!) RUN FER IT, CAESAR—I MEAN DAWSON! IT'S THE ROVING MARSHAL, LASH LARUE!



I WOULDN'T TRY TO RUN IF I WERE YOU! YOU CAN EITHER COME TO THE JAILHOUSE PEACEFULLY OR BE DRAGGED LIKE THE REST OF YOUR GANG!



AND LATER, AFTER THE WHOLE GANG IS LOCKED UP.....

AND NOW THAT ALL THOSE GRITTERS ARE IN JAIL, I RECKON THERE WON'T BE ANYONE AROUND TO TRY TO STOP YOUR PRINTING THE TRUTH!

I'LL ALWAYS DO THAT, LASH! NOW I WANT YOU TO SEE THE FIRST COPY OF MY LATEST ISSUE--



WHY, LASH! YOU'RE BLUSHING!

ER--ER, I'LL BE SEEING YOU, SAM! SO LONG!



COMIX CARDS
appear every
issue in
LASH LARUE
FOLLOW THE ADVENTURES OF
GOLDEN ARROW
IN
WHIZ
EVERY MONTH!
ONLY 10¢ AT YOUR LOCAL
NEWSSTAND!



Lash LARUE

and the **GHOST**
in the
HILLS!



Ghosts don't exist! That's what Lash Larue thought until one committed murder in the hills and the roving marshal was assigned to capture it and bring the ghost to justice!

AT THE DEEVER BAR DOUBLE X RANCH----

HELLO, TED, IS YOUR FATHER HOME?

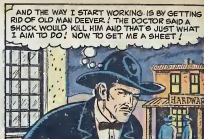
I'M SORRY, MR. KRUNCH, BUT HE'S GONE INTO TOWN! HE'S VISITING DR. JASON WHO HAS HIS OFFICE RIGHT NEXT TO YOUR LAW OFFICE!



WELL THEN, I RECKON I'LL HAVE TO RACE RIGHT BACK THERE! I'VE GOT SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO DISCUSS WITH HIM!







LATER, AS DEEVER IS RIDING THROUGH THE HILLS BACK TO HIS RANCH ---



BUT RIDING THROUGH THE HILLS UP ABOVE AT THE SAME TIME IS NONE OTHER THAN THE ROVING MARSHAL, LASH LARUE!



THE JOKER IS GETTING AWAY, BUT I'VE GOT TO HELP THE OLD MAN! HE SEEMS TO BE HAVING A HEART ATTACK!



SHORTLY AFTER--

HE'S DEAD.
THE SHOCK WAS
TOO MUCH FOR
HIS HEART.

THAT PRONY
GHOST IS
RESPONSIBLE!
SOMEBODY'S GOT
TO NOTIFY THIS POOR
MAN'S KIN. DO YOU
KNOW WHO HE
IS, DOCTOR?



YES! HE WAS A PATIENT OF
MINE! HIS NAME IS DEEVER, HE
LIVED WITH HIS SON ON THE BAR
DOUBLE X RANCH, JUST OUTSIDE
OF TOWN!

LET'S GO,
BLACK DIAMOND!



BUT AS LASH REACHES THE BAR DOUBLE X---



WHAT'S
THIS ALL
ABOUT?

THIS LIAR CLAIMS MY FATHER OWES
HIM FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS WHICH IS
DUE BY MIDNIGHT, OTHERWISE HE'S
GOING TO FORECLOSE ON THE RANCH!
MY FATHER NEVER BORROWED A PENNY
IN HIS LIFE AND AS SOON AS HE GETS
HYP, HE'LL TELL YOU SO!



I'M AFRAID YOUR DAD WON'T BE
COMING BACK! HE'S DEAD!

DEAD? BUT HOW?
WHEN?



AFTER LASH EXPLAINS---

I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR FATHER, TED!
UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES I'LL GIVE YUH
TILL THE MORNING TO PAY BACK THE MONEY
OR CLEAR OFF THE RANCH! IF YUH STILL
DOUBT MY WORD, I'VE GOT THE LOAN
PAPERS YOUR FATHER SIGNED
IN MY OFFICE!

WHY YOU--



LOSING YOUR TEMPER WON'T
SOLVE MATTERS! THE BEST
THING FOR YOU TO DO IS GO
DOWN AND TAKE A LOOK AT
THE PAPERS IN THE MORNING
AND SEE IF IT'S REALLY YOUR
FATHER'S SIGNATURE!



TED, DID YOUR
FATHER HAVE
ANY ENEMIES
WHO MIGHT
HAVE WANTED
TO SCARE HIM
TO DEATH?

NO! MY POP
DIDN'T HAVE
AN ENEMY IN
THE WORLD!



"I KNOW HOW BROKEN UP YOU MUST FEEL, TED, SO TRY TO GET SOME SHUT-EYE; I'LL SEE YOU IN THE MORNING!"



THE NEXT MORNING IN THE LOCAL SHERIFF'S OFFICE ---

"I'D LIKE TO HELP YUH, LASH, BUT I CAN'T THINK OF A SOUL WHO'D WANT TO HURT OLD MAN DEEVER!"

MAYBE HIS DEATH WAS THE RESULT OF AN ACCIDENTAL PRACTICAL JOKE, BUT EVERYONE IN TOWN KNEW HE HAD A BAD HEART AND THAT A SUDDEN SHOCK WOULD BE FATAL!



AT THAT MOMENT---

TED DEEVER! WHAT HAPPENED TO YUH?

I JUST HAD A FIGHT WITH LAWYER KRUNCH, BUT I'M NOT HYAR TO TALK TO YUH ABOUT THAT!



KRUNCH HAS THAT MORTGAGE ON THE BAR DOUBLE X THAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT LAST NIGHT AND IT HAS MY FATHER'S SIGNATURE ON IT! BUT I TELL YUH, KRUNCH MUST'VE FOUND SOME WAY TO FOOL MY FATHER INTO SIGNING IT AND IT'S UP TO THE LAW TO FIND OUT HOW BEFORE HE TAKES THE RANCH AWAY!



BUT WHY SHOULD KRUNCH WANT TO CHEAT YUH OUT OF YOUR RANCH? HE'S NOT A RANCHER AND YOUR PROPERTY ISN'T WORTH MUCH!



WAIT A SECOND. IN THE TOWN I JUST CAME FROM, I HEARD THAT THE WESTERN RAILROAD COMPANY WAS INTENDING TO BUY THE BAR DOUBLE X. THAT WOULD MAKE THE RANCH VERY VALUABLE!

THAT'S DIFFERENT! BUT EVEN IF KRUNCH DID TRICK OLD MAN DEEVER INTO SIGNING A PHONY MORTGAGE SO HE COULD TAKE OVER THE LAND, IT WOULD BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO PROVE NOW THAT THE POOR MAN'S DEAD!



"IF WE COULD FIND A CLUE THAT WOULD INDICATE KRUNCH WAS THE GHOST OF THE HILLS, WE'D HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF PROVING THE REST! LET'S DROP IN ON KRUNCH FOR A CHAT!"



BUT WHEN THE TWO LAWYEN REACH KRUNCH'S OFFICE ---

IT'S KRUNCH ALL RIGHT-- AND HE'S DEAD-- SOMEONE SHOT HIM IN THE BACK!

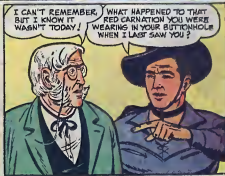
I'M AFRAID THAT SOMEONE'S TED DEEVER! HE PROBABLY LOST HIS HEAD DURING THE FIGHT AND SHOT KRUNCH! THEN HE CAME RUNNING TO US FIGURING THAT WE'D NEVER SUSPECT HIM!



WHAT YOU SAY MAKES SENSE, SHERIFF! BUT I'VE GOT A WILD HUNCH I'D LIKE TO CHECK!

GO AHEAD, LASH! I'M GOING BACK TO LOCK TED UP BEFORE HE TRIES TO RUN AWAY!







...WAS THAT I INTENDED TO SHOOT HIM AS SOON AS HE FINISHED MAKING OUT THE WILL!

AFTER THE FIGHT TED JUST HAD WITH KRUNCH, THEY'RE BOUND TO BLAME HIM FOR THE MURDER! NOW WHEN THE RAILROAD COMPANY WANTS TO BUY THE BAR DOUBLE X, THEY'LL HAVE TO COME TO ME!



YOU'LL NEVER GET AWAY WITH THIS!

OF COURSE I WILL! YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS ABOUT IT, AND YOU WON'T BE IN THIS WORLD LONG ENOUGH TO TELL ANYONE! I'LL SAY YUH NEEDED AN EMERGENCY OPERATION AND NO ONE CAN HOLD ME RESPONSIBLE IF YUH DIE ON THE OPERATING TABLE!



I CAN'T MOVE MY ARM, BUT I CAN STRETCH MY FINGERS!



AND AS JASON CLOSES IN FOR THE KILL----



YOU'RE ONLY DELAYING ME, BUT YUH CAN'T STOP ME! I'LL TAKE THAT WHIP NOW!

IF YUH REALLY WANT IT---



CRASH!



...I'LL LET GO!

IT SHOULDN'T BE TOO HARD NOW TO MANEUVER MYSELF INTO A POSITION WHERE I CAN CUT MYSELF FREE WITH JASON'S SCALPEL!



AND AFTER LASH FREES HIMSELF AND TAKES JASON TO JAIL---

NO WONDER THEY CALL YUH THE BEST ROVING MARSHAL IN THE WEST, LASH! YUH NOT ONLY SAVED TED'S LAND FOR HIM, BUT YUH ALSO SOLVED TWO MURDERS!

THANKS FOR EVERYTHING! I KNEW I COULD COUNT ON THE LAW FOR REAL JUSTICE!



AND AS THE CLEVER ROVING MARSHAL WAS FIGURED OUT, JASON CRASHES INTO THE WALL, KNOCKING HIMSELF OUT!

DUSTY "HELPLESS HELPER"

TOM JONES' SWEET APPLE CIDER MILL

NOW I WANT YUH TUH CLEAN OUT THE MILL, DUSTY!

GOSH O'HEMLOCK, BOSS! I NEED A HELPER! ALL THE WORK AROUND HYAR IS ENOUGH TUH KILL ONE MAN!



OKAY, DUSTY! YUH'VE BEEN COMPLAINING SO MUCH, I HIRED AN ASSISTANT FER YUH! HE'S OVER THAR! HIS NAME IS BRAINY!

GOOD! NOW WE'LL GET TUH WORK CLEANING OUT THE MILL!



A FEW MOMENTS LATER....

WHAT'S IN HYAR, DUSTY?

CIDER! WHAT DO YUH THINK! NOW TURN IT OFF!

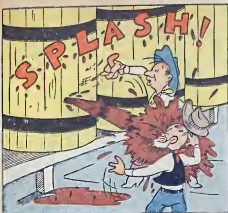


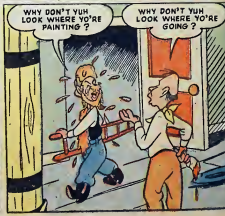
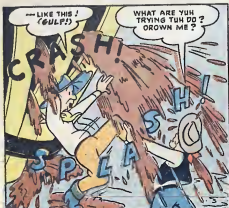
HEY! WE'RE HYAR TUH CLEAN OUT THE MILL NOT DRINK IT OUT! TURN OFF THAT CIDER!

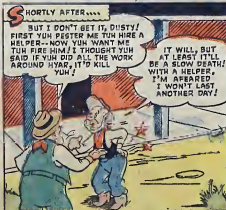


OKAY! OKAY!











RED HANDED

By Clement Good



SHERIFF "Hawk" Hawkins stopped by the hotel desk. He was dust-covered from hours in the saddle and beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead.

"Any luck, sheriff?" asked Bertie Dark, his little eyes bright with interest.

"I reckon you are referring to our search for Red Scar, the robber," drawled the sheriff, pushing his hat back and dabbing his face with a red bandana. "The answer is no. The posse and I have been V-ing the leather all day without finding a trace of the owlhoot."

"That's tough," responded Bertie. His voice sounded sincere, but his eyes seemed to be laughing. "Anything we can do for you, sheriff?"

"Not that I know of unless you've had any more robberies while I was out scouring the foothills," responded the lawman. "I just dropped in here to kind of look around again and see if there were any clues I overlooked, seeing as the first robbery was committed right in this hotel and the other three victims were all guests here. Seems almost as if somebody might have been tipping off Red Scar as to which ones were carrying a loaded poke."

"That's possible," reflected Bertie. "Or maybe Red Scar just figured, this being the best hotel, that anybody who stopped here would have to have cash."

Bertie Dark had worked in Boston as the night clerk in a hotel. The young man found the routine work very dull and boring. He yearned for excitement. So it wasn't surprising that when the gold rush started and people began racing for California to grab their share of the new-found wealth, Bertie Dark threw down his job as a night clerk in a Boston hotel and headed West. After a hazardous trip across the plains and mountains he arrived in a mushrooming town called Frontier City. Being broke, he took a job. He was night clerk in the *Frontier City Hotel*.

At first the new job seemed to have some of that excitement and glamor that Bertie had so long sought. The forty-niners were rough and ready men. There were big men, bold men, brave men, strong men. Often there were fist fights and sometimes there was gunplay. Robberies were not uncommon. For a time Bertie got a vicarious thrill out of just being near, just being spoken to, by these roaring pioneers who were ready to risk their lives in the mad scramble for the wealth in the hills.

But soon the second-hand excitement wore off. Bertie Dark began to brood. "This is worse than Boston," he thought. "Back there, I wasn't doing anything exciting, but neither was anybody else. Here, everybody's doing something exciting except me!"

Yet Bertie couldn't bring himself to go out and dig for gold. Digging seemed like work, too.

Sheriff Hawk Hawkins' manner seemed casual enough, but he was really studying the spare, rather pale young man behind the desk; and he felt a strange sense of distaste at what he saw. Bertie had a weak mouth and his eyes seemed to lack character.

"Shiftless type," thought the sheriff. He knew more about Bertie than Bertie realized. For instance, the sheriff knew that on a certain day last week Bertie had joined in an afternoon poker game in the back room of the Lucky Vein saloon. His luck had been bad. He got cleaned after a few hands. He had left for a brief time, then had come back with a thousand dollars more to gamble away.

"Where would a clerk get a thousand simoleons?" the sheriff asked himself. He guessed maybe Bertie had helped himself to the money from the hotel safe. But he couldn't prove it.

The sheriff's meditation was interrupted as the clerk asked, with studied casualness, "Any doubt that Red Scar is the man you want, sheriff?"

"I reckon not," said Hawkins. "All four victims said it was he. Of course, he wore a mask hiding most of his face, but they said that big red scar on his gun hand was plain as day. And who else would pull off such daring daytime jobs?"

"Guess you're right. They were daring, all right."

"By the by," continued the lawman, once again dry-sponging his face with the bandana, "has the hotel lost any business lately? Been having any trouble renting rooms on account of the holdups?"

"Oh, no!" laughed the clerk. "After all, there are more people in this town than there are beds. We're absolutely full up and the old man has raised the rates three times. I'd rather own this hotel than a gold mine. I reckon it's never lost a dime since the day it was opened. Take more than a couple of holdups to scare our guests away. And if they do scare, we've got a waiting list a mile long."

"That's good," declared Sheriff Hawkins. "Well, I don't reckon Red Scar is aiming to come looking for me so I'll just mosey along and look for him. Be seeing you."

Bertie watched the sheriff's broad back departing through the door. He snickered. "Got him fooled completely," he said to himself. "He'll never suspect me in a million years!"

As he went about the routine task of night-clerking, Bertie hummed a little song. He patted the safe fondly as he passed it. Two robberies had enabled him to put back the thousand dollars he had "borrowed." Two more had given him a nice little stake for poker-playing or any other enterprise. He fondled the red ink bottle on the shelf behind the desk and chuckled.

It had been so very simple, he thought. A real stroke of genius. Red Scar was notorious as a daring robber. It was known that he had a hide-out in the badlands, undiscovered by the law. So Bertie Dark had worked out a very simple plan to commit robberies and throw the blame on the known bandit. A mask and a smear of red ink on his right hand was all he needed to turn the trick.

Execution of the crimes had been easy and

almost without risk, too. As clerk, he knew much of the wealth and habits of the hotel guests. It had been simply a matter of catching the right ones alone and by surprise.

Under his breath he made a song of it: "They'll never suspect me in a million years."

Mr. King had been an early-riser all his life. Now that he had struck luck with the King mines, he was rich enough to sleep all day, but not sleepy enough. He still rose with the first light of dawn and took a long walk in the crisp morning air. He called it a "constitutional." Other people called it crazy.

He was passing the livery stable when a masked figure stepped out, poked a gun in his ribs, and growled, "Raise 'em!"

"Red Scar!" exclaimed Mr. King, eyeing the red streak across the gunman's wrist.

"Not Red Scar! Just a cheap imitation," drawled another voice.

The bandit whirled, startled to see the sheriff holding a gun on him from behind. His gun barked, but missed. Returning fire, the sheriff clipped the masked man in the gun arm so the bandit's weapon clattered harmlessly to the ground.

"Hawk!" Hawkins ripped the mask from the robber's face and Mr. King got his third surprise. "The hotel clerk!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," agreed the sheriff, "the hotel clerk with a streak of red ink smeared across his hand to make everybody think he was Red Scar. I suspected him, I trailed him, and now I've caught him red-handed, you might say."

"Dumb luck," snarled Bertie.

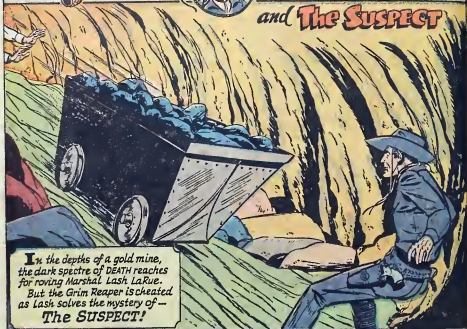
"Not exactly," drawled the lawman. "I knew you were gambling heavier than you could afford and that made me look you over. Then I noticed the red ink bottle in the hotel was clean of dust; had been used lately, though not in the ledgers. You said yourself the hotel was making money and was not 'in the red.' 'Who's been using that red ink?' I asked myself. Well, I found out.

66 "Of course, I knew all along it wasn't the real Red Scar. He was killed in a gun battle over at Rimrock nearly a month ago."

THE END

Lash LARUE

and **The SUSPECT**



In the depths of a gold mine, the dark spectre of DEATH reaches for roving Marshal Lash LaRue. But the Grim Reaper is cheated as Lash solves the mystery of --
The SUSPECT!

AT THE CHIEF MARSHAL'S HEADQUARTERS...



YOU SENT FOR ME, CHIEF?

YES, LASH! THIS IS TOM COLLAGE, OWNER OF THE COLLAGE GOLD MINE IN NEARBY HITOP MOUNTAIN! HE SUSPECTS THAT SOME OF HIS MINERS HAVE BEEN ROBBING HIM REGULARLY.

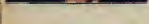
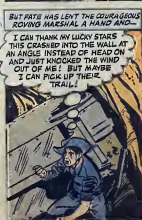
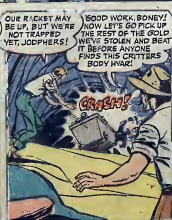
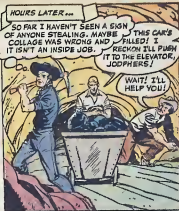
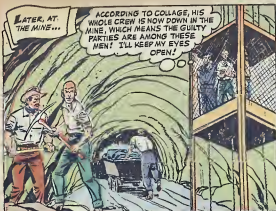
THAT'S RIGHT, LASH, BUT I'VE BEEN UNABLE TO FIND OUT WHO THE GUILTY PARTIES ARE BECAUSE WHEN I'M AROUND THEY'RE ALWAYS ON THEIR GUARD!

AND SINCE EVERYONE AROUND HERE KNOWS ME, TOO, I'M AFRAID I'D HAVE NO MORE LUCK THAN COLLAGE IF I TACKLED THE JOB MYSELF! HOWEVER--

-- SINCE YOU AREN'T KNOWN IN THESE PARTS, I FIGURED YOU'D HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF DISCOVERING WHO'S DOING THE DIRTY WORK!

I CAN'T SAY HOW SUCCESSFUL I'LL BE, CHIEF, BUT I'D SURE LIKE TO TRY! THE BEST WAY TO KEEP AN EYE ON THE MEN WITHOUT AROUSING SUSPICION WOULD BE FOR ME TO GET A JOB AT THE MINE!







LASH! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU!

NEVER MIND THAT! DID YOU SEE ANYTHING OF YOUR TWO MINERS, BONEY AND JODPHERS?



YES! THEY CAME OUT OF THE MINE ABOUT TEN MINUTES AGO. THEY SAID THEY WEREN'T FEELING WELL AND WERE GOING HOME! THEY WENT THAT WAY!

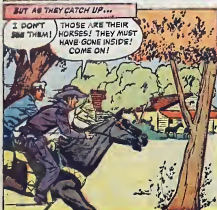
THEY'RE THE MEN WE'RE AFTER! GET YOUR HORSE AND FOLLOW ME!



LATER...

I THINK WE'VE FINALLY SPOTTED THEM! AND IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, THEY'RE SLOWING DOWN!

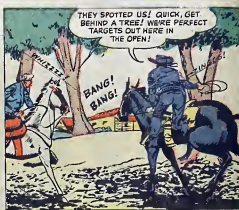
THEY DON'T KNOW THEY'RE BEING FOLLOWED BUT JUST THE SAME THEY'D NEVER SLOW DOWN UNLESS THEY'VE REACHED SOME KIND OF HIDE-OUT! LET'S SPEED IT UP!



BUT AS THEY CATCH UP...

I DON'T SEE THEM!

THOSE ARE THEIR HORSES! THEY MUST HAVE GONE INSIDE! COME ON!



THEY SPOTTED US! QUICK, GET BEHIND A TREE! WE'RE PERFECT TARGETS OUT HERE IN THE OPEN!

BANG! BANG!



WE'RE SAFE NOW! BUT SO ARE THEY!

YOU KEEP FIRING TOWARD THE HOUSE AND KEEP THEM DISTRACTED—



--WHILE I TRY A LITTLE TRICK OF MY OWN!



STEALTHILY, LASH CRAWLS TO THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE AND AS THE CROOKS STICK THEIR GUNS OUT OF THE WINDOW, ANSWERING COLLA'S FIRE...

I'VE GOT THEIR GUNS, COLLA! HOLD YOUR FIRE!

SWAP!

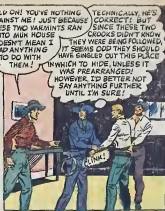


I'M GOING IN!



DON'T SHOOT! WE GIVE UP!

OH, I SEE THERE ARE THREE OF YOU! YOU CAN PUT YOUR HANDS UP, TOO!



HOLD ON! YOU'VE NOTHING AGAINST ME! JUST BECAUSE THESE TWO VARMINTS RAN INTO MUM HOUSE DOESN'T MEAN I HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THEM!

TECHNICALLY, HE'S CORRECT! BUT SINCE THESE TWO CROOKS DIDN'T KNOW THEY WERE BEING FOLLOWED, IT SEEMS ODD THEY SHOULD HAVE GINSELED OUT THIS PLACE IN WHICH TO HIDE, UNLESS IT WAS PREARRANGED! HOWEVER, I'D BETTER NOT SAY ANYTHING FURTHER UNTIL I'M SURE!



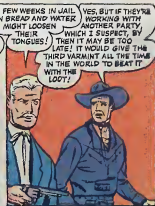
I RECKON YOU'RE RIGHT! I WAS TOO HASTY IN JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS! I'M SORRY!

THAT'S ALL RIGHT! NO HARM WAS DONE!



I SEE YOU GOT THE LOWDOWN COYOTES, LASH! BUT DID THEY TELL YUH WHERE THEY HID ALL THE GOLD THEY STOLE FROM THE MINE?

NO, WE DIDN'T -- AND WHAT'S MORE, WE NEVER WILL!



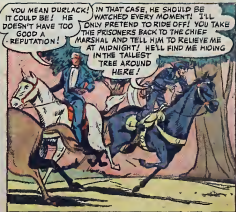
A FEW WEEKS IN JAIL ON BREAD AND WATER MIGHT LOOSEN THEIR TONGUES!

YES, BUT IF THEY'RE WORKING WITH ANOTHER PARTY, WHICH I SUSPECT, BY THEN IT MAY BE TOO LATE! IT WOULD GIVE THE THIRD VARMINT ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD TO BEAT IT WITH THE LOOT!



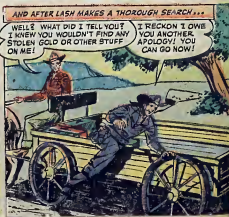
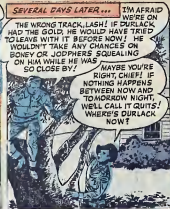
BUT WHAT WOULD THEY HAVE TO GAIN BY THAT?

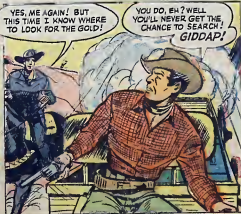
PLENTY! WHEN THEY GOT OUT OF JAIL, THEY COULD FIND THEIR PARTNER AND GET THEIR SHARE OF THE GOLD! MY OWN HUNCH IS THAT THE GOLD IS HIDDEN SOME PLACE AROUND HERE -- AND THAT RANCHER INSIDE IS THE THIRD PARTY!

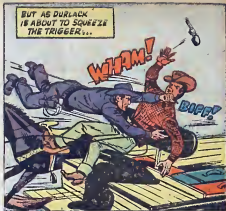


YOU MEAN DURLACK! IT COULD BE! HE DOESN'T HAVE TOO GOOD A REPUTATION!

IN THAT CASE, HE SHOULD BE WATCHED EVERY MOMENT! I'LL ONLY PRETEND TO RIDE OFF! YOU TAKE THE PRISONERS BACK TO THE CHIEF MARSHAL AND TELL HIM TO RELIEVE ME AT MIDNIGHT! HE'LL FIND ME HIDING IN THE TALLEST TREE AROUND HERE!



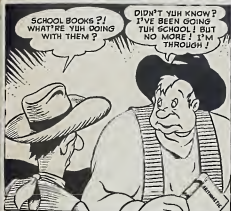




MOLASSES MOUTH



The **CRAZY**
TEACHER





LASH LARUE

**AND HIS
WHIP OF
JUSTICE**